

Storm Lake Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

VAN BUREN COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Van Buren Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Van Buren Community School District received a 2002 Harkin grant totaling \$837,000. These funds were used to build a school library which is also available to the community, a lunchroom, an art and music room and a meeting space at the Douds Elementary School. With a financial commitment from the community through the passage of a local option sales tax and a contribution from the Van Buren Foundation, the Douds Elementary School created a safe and supportive learning environment.

In 2003, a second Harkin grant for \$500,000 was awarded to the Van Buren School District. Matching funds came from a generous donation from the William M. and Donna J. Hoaglin Foundation. The funds were used for the remodeling of the art and music room at Stockport Elementary School, and to add another pre-school classroom at the Birmingham Early Childhood Center. These schools are the modern, state-of-the-art facilities that befit the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, they are the kind of schools that every child in America deserves.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of

collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Van Buren Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—Tony Huffman, Terry Jester, Dick Hornberg, Sheila Parsons, Stan Whitten, Karen McEntee and Brian Starnes and former board members Jon Finney, Dixie Daugherty, Jean McIntosh, Monte Humble, Bill Shewmaker and Dr. Tim Blair. I would also like to recognize superintendent Karen Stinson, former superintendent Richard Barton and principal Charles Russell.

The projects would not have been possible without the financial support of two local foundations and I would like to recognize the board of directors of the Hoaglin Foundation; and the Van Buren Foundation board of directors, whose members include Art Ovrom, Dean Folker, Jon Finney, B.R. Poole, Steve Kisling, Rex Strait, Sandy McLain, Davis Pollock, Rich Lytle, Jim Dorothy, Butch Gates, Matt Manning, Jeanne Erickson, John O. Manning, Don VonSeggen, Pat Miller, George Manning, Mary J. Smith, Allen Gunn and Crystal Cronk.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Van Buren Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

WEST DELAWARE COUNTY COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the West Delaware County Community School District, and to report on their participation in

a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The West Delaware County Community School District received several Harkin fire safety grants totaling \$270,199 which it used to upgrade the fire alarm system and improve emergency lighting and other items at the high school and middle school as well as add fire rated doors and smoke and heat detectors at Lambert Elementary School. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the superintendent Bob Cue and the entire staff, administration, and governance in the West Delaware County Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Elwyn Curtis, Mike Ryan, Steve Dudak, Cheryl Stufflebeam and Linda Bessey, as well as past members former president Dan Zumbach, Mike Carr, Ilona Durey, Gary Johnson, Jack Young, and Edith Fortmann-Comley.

Other dedicated district staff who were instrumental in the success of the grant implementation whom I would also like to recognize are the late superintendent Rick Hilbert, business manager Ron Goerdts, building and grounds director Ron Swartz, and technology coordinator Ron Struble.

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